



The Ranger Review

Montezuma Castle, Montezuma Well, & Tuzigoot National Monuments

The Desert Floor

By Ranger Sharlot Hart

Often the first feeling or thought that pops into our minds when we see Sinaguan ruins is awe at the incredible struggle that life must have been. Laboring under jars of water, climbing up and down ladders! Life must have been grueling, right? Sure we have the grocery store, the corner store, and the big-box store....but those farmers had everything they needed right on the desert floor— most in the form of wild plants.

So, what did you pick up this week? Flour and baking soda? Jam or fruit? Maybe you needed some new sandals or the kids wanted new paints and brushes. Or maybe you had a cold and picked up some medicine or vitamins. All of these items can be made from desert plants.

The mesquite tree that gives shade has many uses. The wood is *excellent* for burning, however the ground bean pods make a nutritious flour that may lower diabetes rates. It is also good for making tools, and both the sap and the leaves can be used medicinally. Acacia trees are good for most of the same uses (tools and a wash for burns), while the tall Arizona Sycamore makes great ladders.

Many people have seen prickly pear jam, but the pads of the cactus are also sold in many grocery stores. Called nopales they are both healthy to eat and effective when used instead of aloe. Speaking of cacti, the buds of cholla are very high in calcium; which is important

to a culture that does not have dairy products.

What about baking powder? Well, the saltbush which can be used as seasoning can also be burned and the ashes used as a baking powder. And those sandals and pain brushes? The yucca and agave plants both have long, tough fibers through their leaves. Those fibers can be made into rope for ladders and sandals, or individually for painting and sewing. And the pigments for paint or dye come from many, many plants throughout the desert.

While we have to take our shopping list to the store, the Sinagua walked out of their door, found the plant and harvested just what they needed. Life was hard, but more so it was different than today. They were set up for the life they lived, passing down the information on how to obtain necessary items just as we do today.



Mesquite beans hanging from the tree. Photo by Sharlot Hart

Sinagua Rock Art

By Ranger Mike Hamende

Almost all people everywhere create art in various forms and places. Throughout the Southwest, we find many cultures that created all kinds of rock art, or images on rocks. While there are not any examples of rock art in Montezuma Castle or Tuzigoot National Monuments, the Sinaguan people did create many images on many rocks throughout the Verde Valley and the Flagstaff areas.

There are three kinds of rock art. The first is a petroglyph. Petroglyphs are images created by removing a chemical coating on rocks in the Southwest called 'Desert Varnish' by either directly pecking on the rock with another rock or using an intermediate rock, bone or other tool like a chisel and hitting the object with another rock. The latter method allows the creator to make a more precise image.

The second kind of rock art is a pictograph or a painting. Various colors of paint were created by using plants or minerals to make the color then mixing that with a binder like water, spit, sap, or eggs. Some pictographs are hand prints created by dipping a hand in paint and pressing it against the rock—like modern finger painting. Or an alternative is to put a hand against the rock and spraying paint around it to create a negative image.

The final kind of rock art created by the Sinaguan people is the cupule. It is a shallow bowl shaped depression created in the rock to hold something or inside an image to possibly allow a person to collect some of the power of the rock, earth, or whatever was portrayed in the image.

Rock art in this area takes the form of some consistent images. Common images are: anthromorphs, zoo morphs, abstractions, shields, hand and foot prints, snakes, and scenes.

Anthromorphs are humanoid forms often with exaggerated features, horns or helmets. They are sel-

dom realistic depictions of human beings. Zoo morphs are animal forms. Often they are very accurate and other times they are very fantastic. Abstractions take the form of spirals, mazes, or geometric patterns. Shields are most often pictographs that are round with symbols or shapes that might have represented the tribe or family. Snake images are often simply wavy lines other times they are more accurate snakes with heads and headdresses. The scenes one finds in this area are usually game herd scenes, sometimes including hunters.

Another interesting form of rock art appears in many places including the area near Montezuma Castle are known as newspapers rocks. Newspaper rocks are large panels of petroglyphs that contain thousands of images. These images often span hundreds of years. It is thought that these panels were placed along travel or trade routes to communicate information to traders or travelers.

One cannot discuss rock art without discussing interpretation. Current thinking is that modern people cannot interpret ancient images since none of the people that created them exist today. So we cannot ask them what the images meant or what their purpose was.

The Sinagua people created lots of rock art throughout the area of the Verde Valley. That does not negate their importance nor how interesting their creations are.



Newspaper Rock, Petrified Forest Copyright © Calvin J. Hamilton



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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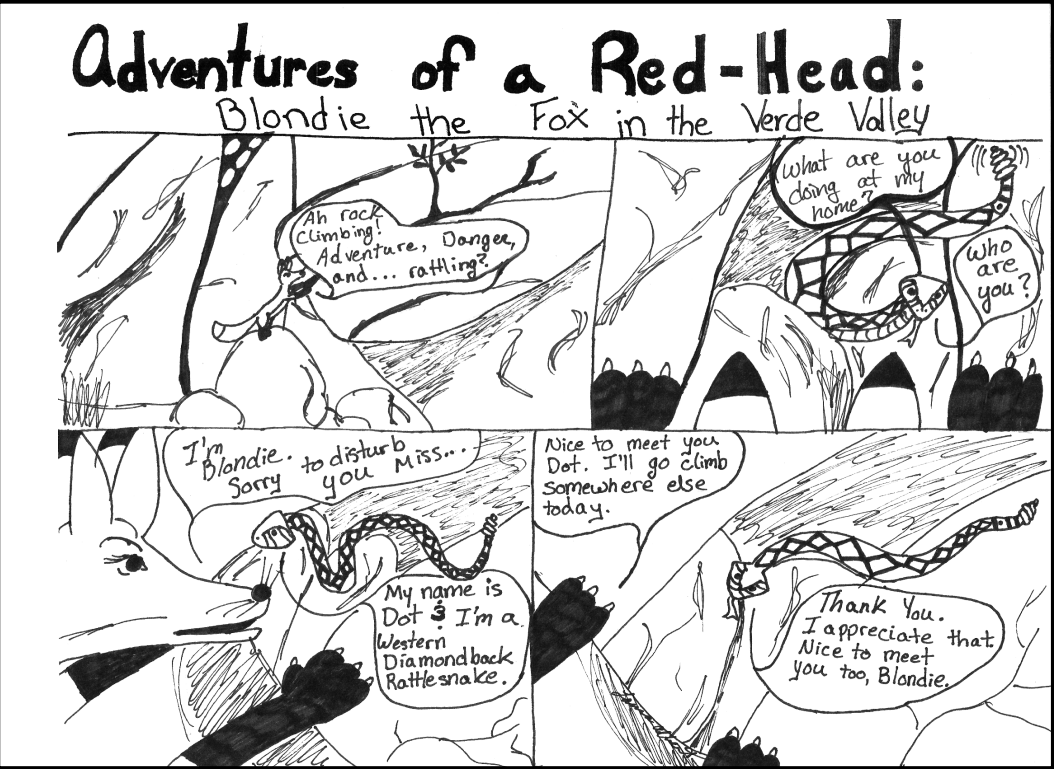
Park Happenings & Funny Pages

By Ranger Laura Albert

The Ranger Review is designed to give you more information about what to see and do while visiting our sites. We hope that you enjoy seeing our parks from a Ranger's point of view!

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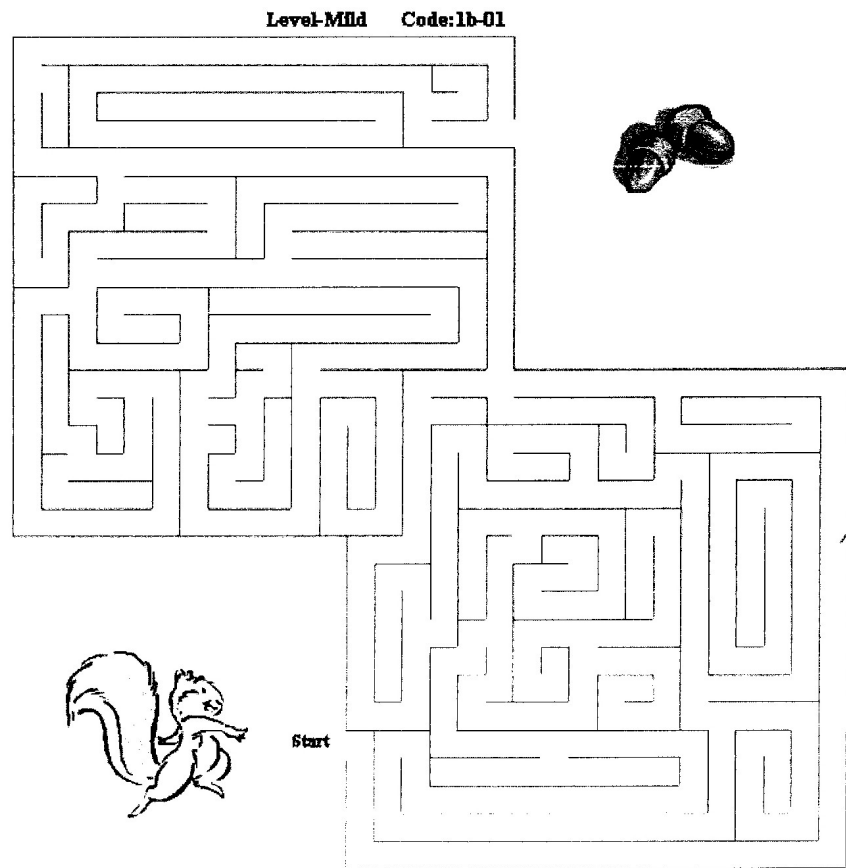
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Jr. Ranger Page

Help the Wildlife

Help the squirrel find his way through the maze to get to his food on the opposite side!



Upcoming Events:

August 1-14, 2010

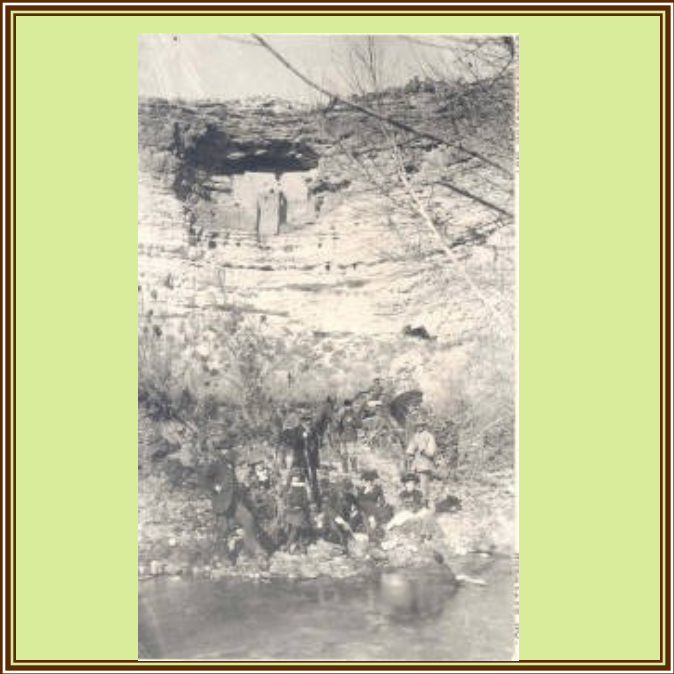
August 1, 2010 10:30 am

Living History demonstration at
Montezuma Castle National Monument.

August 8, 2010 10:30 am

Living History demonstration at
Montezuma Castle National Monument.

View Through the Lens



Historical photo from the turn of the 20th century of a Victorian group visiting Montezuma Castle.

Did you know?



Obsidian Arrowhead. Photo courtesy of nps.gov.

Obsidian was not mined here in the Verde Valley by the Sinaguan peoples. They actually mined salt and traded the salt for this valuable rock. Obsidian is created by felsic lava cooling very quickly not forming crystals to make volcanic glass. This rock is found in rhyolitic lava flows with high amounts of silica in them. The Sinagua used this very hard and sharp rock to make projectile points for arrows, spears, and knives for hunting. Today, obsidian is still in use as surgical instruments like a scalpel for it's sharp edges and ability to stay sterile during surgeries.